NY Times 11/18/76

House Panel Issues Subpoenas in Inquiry On 2 Assassinations

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17 (UPI)—The House Select Committee on Assassinations began today serving about 10 subpoenas in search of new information on the murders of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Major targets of the subpoenas are believed to be information from the files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as testimony from some individual witnesses.

The subpoenas were signed last night by the committee chairman, Representative Thomas N. Downing, Democrat of Virginia, after an all-day meeting in which potential witnesses were discussed and the subpoenas approved.

Both Mr. Downing and Richard A. Sprague, chief counsel for the 11-member panel, declined to say on whom the subpoenas were being served, estimating only that there were quite a few." But a committee spokesman said today that the subpoenas numbered "about 10."

Mr. Downing said the committee planned a staff of 170 to carry out the investigation, which could take at least a year to complete.

Yesterday, the committee viewed picture slides of the aftermath of Dr. King's assassination on the balcony of a motel in Memphis on April 4, 1968. The slides included a picture of the gaping wound in Dr. King's neck.

The committee was told the wound was caused by an expanding bullet fired from a Remington rifle. The rifle, with a telescope sight, was found almost immediately after the civil rights leader was slain.

James Earl Ray, an escaped convict, was subsequently arrested and charged with the murder of Dr. King. Mr. Ray pleaded guilty and is serving a 99-year sentence.

Confusion Over Remark

Considerable confusion was caused when Robert Ozer, a staff counsel, remarked during an open meeting yesterday that he had knowledge that documents were destroyed since the committee was formed last September.

Mr. Ozer was cut short by Mr. Sprague, however, before he could elaborate, and the committee went into executive session.

A committee member later told reporters that Mr. Ozer might have been referring to the destruction of documents held by the Memphis police force in connection with student disorders. This was apparently done in connection with a state university student's suit demanding the destruction of his files while he was reportedly under surveillance for four years.

Neither Mr. Downing nor Mr. Sprague would clarify the situation at the end of the meeting. "We will not discuss what we have information on," Mr. Sprague said.

In Memphis, however, Police Chief W. O. Crumby said the local authorities had never destroyed any documents concerning the King case.

The committee recessed until Dec. 8.